

FREE OUR RESOURCES

(Mr. TERRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TERRY. Madam Speaker, free our resources. Our families have to pay \$4, almost \$4 a gallon to fill up. They are spending \$70 just to fill up mid-size cars. We can't take this anymore, but yet we have the resources right here within the United States, whether it's offshore, Alaska, oil shale in Colorado that has been taken off and we can't drill in it. Today, we are going to do tax credits, 1 year of tax credits, that are going to be meaningless to develop biofuels and cellulosic ethanol.

So we have the resources here, my friends, to decrease the price at the pumps by adding more supply, and it's being blocked. It's being blocked by the leadership here. Free up our resources, Madam Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PAS-TOR). Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION
OF H.R. 6049, RENEWABLE EN-
ERGY AND JOB CREATION ACT
OF 2008

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 1212 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1212

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 6049) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide incentives for energy production and conservation, to extend certain expiring provisions, to provide individual income tax relief, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions of the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 6049 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

□ 1045

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS). All time yielded during consideration of this rule is for debate purposes only. I yield myself such time as I may consume. I also ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 1212.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 1212 provides for consideration of H.R. 6049, the Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008. The rule provides for 1 hour of debate controlled by the Committee on Ways and Means and waives all points of order against consideration of the bill, except clauses 9 and 10 of rule XXI. The rule also provides one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this rule and H.R. 6049, the Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008, which will not only bring this country into a new alternative energy future, but strengthen our economy by directing fiscally responsible tax relief to middle class families, creating jobs at small businesses in the very towns and rural communities where we need it the most.

The legislation this rule provides for consideration of will extend a number of critical tax relief measures targeted at middle class families and small businesses, including deductions for State and local sales tax, tuition education expenses, and expanding the child tax credit and research and development tax credit.

During these uncertain economic times, it is also absolutely critical that we pass legislation to invest in jobs for today and long-term development for tomorrow, including alternative energy like wind and biomass that will reduce our Nation's dependence on foreign oil and bring the price of gas at the pump to a level families and businesses can afford. The best way to encourage growth and development of new technology is to let businesses invest their own money in ways that expand our economic horizons. Tax credits for alternative energy production have the power to truly jump-start our economy and create good paying, highly skilled jobs that can't be sent overseas.

In my upstate New York district, our location, natural resources, renowned colleges and universities and world class scientific and technological companies perfectly poise our community to seize this opportunity to create a new green economy, complete with green jobs.

I have spoken numerous times throughout the debate over how to extend these renewable tax credits and about the new businesses in my district that are utilizing the national invest-

ment in alternative energy to create good paying jobs in upstate New York. Those businesses are to be commended, and that is why I am proud to support nearly \$20 billion in long-term clean renewable energy tax incentives and investment included in the Energy and Job Creation Act. I hope that doing so will encourage other companies to follow suit, both in our region and across this great Nation.

The underlying legislation extends and modifies critical tax credits for the production of electricity from renewable sources ranging from wind, solar and geothermal energy to closed-loop and open-loop biomass. It would also extend clean renewable energy bonds, efficient commercial building tax incentives, investment tax credit for solar and fuel cell systems, tax credit for energy efficiency upgrades to existing homes, tax credits for production of efficient home appliances and tax incentives for consumer purchases of energy efficient products. Most of these incentives either expired at the end of last year or are set to expire at the end of this year. It is vitally important to sustaining the development of clean energy technology industries that these incentives are extended.

H.R. 6049 also includes an extension of the research and development tax credit that allows companies a tax credit for a portion of their research and development expenditures. Extending the R&D credit is vital to ensuring that America remains on the cutting edge of innovation that keeps our companies competitive and working here, not offshore. This credit is of particular interest to the area that I represent because its extension will further the expansion of the microchip fabrication and nanotechnology industries which are beginning to blossom in our region.

American companies rely on this credit and upon its continuity to adequately plan their long-term research projects. I support this 1-year extension to provide that continuity and I will continue to work with leaders on the committee and in this body to seek a permanent extension that would eliminate concerns over expirations and lapses.

The bill also extends important tax credits for individuals, as well as creating new and expanded credits. It extends for 1 year the personal income tax deductions for tuition and education expenses, the State and local sales taxes, and teachers' out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies. The bill creates a new standard deduction for up to \$700 for couples to cover State and local property taxes, and expands the eligibility for the refundable child tax credit. Under the child tax credit, certain low-income taxpayers can claim a refundable tax credit equal to 15 percent of their earned income above an inflation-adjusted threshold. In 2008, this threshold is set to be \$12,050, but under H.R. 6049 that threshold will be reduced to \$8,500, providing increased

relief to more than 12 million families with children nationwide.

Supporting H.R. 6049 comes down to simple common sense. We can create tens of thousands of new jobs, reduce our dependence on oil from hostile regimes, reduce greenhouse gases, spur innovation and provide tax relief to middle class families, and we can do it all—and let me emphasize this—all of those things, without adding to the national deficit.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this rule and the underlying legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and friend from New York (Mr. ARCURI) for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, this rule marks the 60th time that the leaders of this Congress have totally closed down the House floor by refusing to allow any Member of this House to offer an amendment to a bill pending and have it debated and voted upon. This is more closed rules than any Congress in the history of our country, which is exactly the opposite of the promise that the Democrat leaders made to the American people when they promised to run the most open and honest House ever.

The House is not open when no amendments are allowed to be offered and when a Republican alternative is blocked from even a minute of debate and denied a vote on the House floor. And it is not in the most honest House when the Rules Committee Democrats block the Republican plan to prevent tax increases from being considered, using the excuse that it doesn't meet House PAYGO rules, especially, Mr. Speaker, when it was just one week ago that the same Democrats were blatantly violating PAYGO rules by billions of dollars in the farm bill. Under this liberal Congress, it is only okay to break the House rules, apparently, when you are increasing spending by billions of dollars, but not by preventing tax increases on the American people.

The Republican plan that was denied, that the Democrats refused to allow the House to vote upon, would provide the following: 1 year of relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax, or the AMT; a 2-year extension of the State and local sales tax deduction for those States that do not have a State income tax; 2 more years for the research and development tax credit; 2 years for the tuition tax credit; and extensions for more expiring tax provisions.

This Democrat bill, for example, does absolutely nothing, nothing at all, to fix the AMT tax for 2008. Twenty-one million middle class individuals will pay an additional \$61.5 billion in higher taxes next April if the AMT is not fixed

and addressed. That is an average of over \$2,800 per affected taxpayer, Mr. Speaker. The Republican plan fully fixes it, but today that fix is not even allowed to be considered on the House floor. Instead, the House is given one choice, and that is a fool's choice bargain to raise taxes by \$54 billion in order to simply extend existing tax policies that are due to expire.

Mr. Speaker, current provisions in tax law are expiring, and Congress needs to act to keep these taxes from going up. But, Mr. Speaker, we all know that is no excuse to raise other taxes by billions of dollars.

I and many of my Republican colleagues support a great number of the tax relief extensions included in this bill, including the State and local sales tax deduction, the research and development tax credit, education and tuition tax credits, tax credits for teachers, and several renewable income tax credits. These low tax policies have been law for many years, Mr. Speaker, and they have been extended multiple times, multiple times, and always without raising taxes.

My Democrat colleagues will try to defend their tax-raising ways by invoking the PAYGO rules they ignored just last week. They will claim that this is just being responsible and it is not about increasing the national debt, that it is about government living within its means.

If only that were true, Mr. Speaker. But it is not. All you have to do is to read the final budget plan for next year that this House will vote on later today. Their budget reveals this Congress as what they truly are, and what they truly are, Mr. Speaker, is old time tax-and-spend liberals. In their budget, spending increases by \$250 billion over the next 5 years. They increase the debt limit in 2008 by \$654 billion, which is the largest increase in history, and they raise taxes by \$683 billion, which is the largest amount in American history. More spending, higher debt, record tax increases. That is obviously the plan of this liberal Congress.

Now, my Democrat colleagues will also try to claim the tax increases that are in this bill aren't really that bad. But the facts are the facts, and the facts are that this bill unnecessarily increases taxes by over \$50 billion. And that is just the beginning. Remember that their budget would increase taxes by over two-thirds of a trillion dollars. If they aren't raising your taxes this time in this bill, I can assure you, your time is coming. They will get you the next time.

When this liberal Congress imposes the largest tax increase in American history to pay for more government spending, don't think that you can escape permanently their tax-and-spend ways. Their tax increase plans include cutting the child tax credit, cutting that in half; reinstating the marriage penalty and the death tax; and a tax increase for every single American taxpayer. It would even levy taxes on low-

income workers who currently pay none.

But if there is a ray of sunshine, and there always is a ray of sunshine in bills, there is a newly created tax break, one that will put a big smile on the faces of some in this country, and it is worth over \$1.5 billion.

□ 1100

The only problem, Mr. Speaker, is that this new tax break is only for trial lawyers. So the only people who will be smiling are the trial lawyers and presumably the Democrats that they give tens of millions of dollars in campaign contributions to each year.

Under this bill, the American taxpayers will be subsidizing speculative lawsuits by trial lawyers to the tune of \$1.5 billion. This special interest tax break will allow trial lawyers to make special arrangements that essentially allow them to gamble on lawsuits where they get paid on contingency fees if they win. Meanwhile, taxpayers will be footing the bill for trial lawyers writing off the expenses of conducting these "sue them and see what we can win" lawsuits. Count me among those, Mr. Speaker, who believe we already have too many lawsuits in this country and that we shouldn't be inventing new special tax breaks that may and probably will encourage more lawsuits. Our justice system can operate fairly, as it has done so for many years, without having to give special tax treatment to trial lawyers.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to specifically mention the extension of the State and local sales tax deduction that is included in this bill. For nearly 20 years, Americans who paid State income taxes could deduct those taxes from their Federal tax bill, while Americans who paid State sales taxes but had no State income tax were not allowed to do so.

In 2006, the Republican Congress restored the sales tax deduction after years of bipartisan effort from the congressional delegations of the affected States, including my home State of Washington. The initial reinstatement of the deduction was for 2 years, 2004 and 2005. In 2006, the Republican Congress extended the sales tax deduction for 2 more years, 2006 and 2007. That deduction has now expired, and this deduction does not exist for this year, 2008.

Efforts last year to extend this deduction and ensure it didn't expire were unfortunately blocked by the Democrat leaders. I regret that the extension provided for the sales tax deduction in this bill is for 1 year only.

Mr. Speaker, this is a step backwards. This deduction has been extended 2 years each time in the past, and it should be extended 2 years now. Otherwise, we face expiring in about 6 months from now because, as I mentioned, there is no sales tax deduction for the calendar year 2008. So if we are to pass this and it were to be signed into law, we would have 6 months on it

from right now. The bipartisan Senate bill introduced last month by the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee includes a 2-year extension of this sales tax deduction.

The Republican plan that House leaders and the Rules Committee last night blocked from being considered and debated on the floor today provided for a 2-year extension. An amendment was filed with the Rules Committee by Mr. BRADY of Texas which also would have extended the deduction for 2 years, but that too was blocked by the Rules Committee from being debated on this floor.

It is very unfortunate that this bill moves sales tax deduction fairness backwards, not forwards. Taxpayers in income tax States have a permanent tax deduction, and taxpayers in sales tax States that have no State income tax deserve, in my view, equal treatment. The sales tax deduction should be made into permanent law. Even though I think a 2-year extension is better than 1, it should be made permanent. At the very least, they deserve at least a 2-year extension.

What really is more upsetting, Mr. Speaker, is that this bill could have provided very easily under existing PAYGO rules a 2-year extension. The over \$1.5 billion cost of the tax deduction given to trial lawyers could instead have been used to give a 1-year extension of the sales tax deduction for those States.

So this bill chooses to create a new billion-plus-dollar tax cut for trial lawyers over tax fairness for the millions of residents in the State of Washington, my State, the State of Florida, the States of Texas, Tennessee, Nevada, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Mr. Speaker, I have supported every bill that has passed this House to reinstate and extend the State sales tax deduction, but none of these bills, none of these bills that extended that was being held hostage for another tax cut for another special interest.

Restoring and continuing the State sales tax deduction is a matter of fairness. The residents of sales tax States shouldn't have their fair treatment conditioned upon passing huge tax increases.

The rule that is currently before the House and the underlying bill reveal this Congress for what it really is. The rule is totally closed and does not allow debate or a vote on any amendments or an alternative Republican plan. It violates Speaker PELOSI's promise to the American people to run an open and honest House. The bill itself is just the opening act of a move to impose the largest tax increase in history on the American people. Mr. Speaker, under this liberal Congress the only tax bill allowed on the floor of the House is one that will raise taxes. Under this liberal Congress, tax relief is a myth and tax increases are a certainty. Mr. Speaker, under this liberal Congress, Americans will be sending more and more of their hard-earned

dollars to Washington, DC so this Congress can increase spending and the size of the Federal Government.

My colleagues should oppose this closed rule and this tax increase bill. We should demand a clean tax relief extension bill that doesn't include new tax breaks for trial lawyers and over \$50 billion in tax increases. This bill we know will never pass the Senate, and it will never be signed into law, if on the slim chance that it should pass both Houses and be sent to the President. Raising taxes right now on the American economy is simply the wrong thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make one point. Some people in this institution tend to talk about trial lawyers and seem to want to point out the things that they do that they think aren't good. But no one talks about the fact that trial lawyers are out there representing people who have been injured. They are protecting people's civil rights. They are defending people on a contingency fee basis who don't have the money to come forward and sue people that have hurt them. That is critically important. And this bill does not give a windfall tax rebate to lawyers. All it does is allow them to claim expenditures that they have put out in the year that they have made that expenditure, no different than any other business in this country can do.

So I think it is unfair to criticize trial attorneys who are out there doing the kind of things that people hire them to do; and that is protecting people's civil rights and ensuring that people who are injured are able to get what they need so that they are not victimized even further.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California, my friend and colleague from the Rules Committee, Ms. MATSUI.

Ms. MATSUI. I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the rule and the underlying legislation. This bill is a good example of Congress taking action to address the needs of America's businesses and consumers.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is in a downturn. More and more Americans are feeling insecure about their future, and they are looking to this Congress for relief. The tax extenders package that is before us today will help millions of working families cope with everyday expenses of life from tuition to the cost of caring for their children. It will also move our Nation forward to meet the many energy challenges we face.

Investing in renewable resources is the best long-term strategy to reduce dependence on foreign oil and lower energy costs. Clean energy is also a major economic engine that will power the economy of the future.

In my hometown of Sacramento, clean energy investments made years

ago are now sustaining over 90 local businesses, from solar and wind companies, to cellulosic fuel and green building enterprises. Clean energy has changed my district's business climate forever. Sacramento's clean energy economy can be replicated across this country, but Congress needs to provide the right incentives to make this vision a successful reality. This bill will help current and future generations live in a country with a healthier economy, a cleaner environment, and a more sustainable policy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM).

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding.

I was surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the Rules Committee chose to reject an amendment that I offered that was an attempt to bring some clarity and light to this debate, particularly as it relates to energy needs.

I represent a district, Mr. Speaker, in the Chicago area which the Chicago Tribune this week has reported has the highest gas prices in the Nation. So in an attempt to try to take that on, I offered an amendment that I thought was a very straightforward thing, not meant to be controversial, not meant to be overly partisan, just a good commonsense idea that unfortunately the majority on the Rules Committee rejected. That was a simple thing, and that would create a tax credit, Mr. Speaker, a tax credit for biofuel vehicles.

Right now we have got a tax credit for alternative fuel vehicles, and that is great. But you have got a lot of municipalities in my district that are really suffering under the weight of these high gas prices, and they are looking for alternatives and a biofuel vehicle is just one of those things. So, in other words, oftentimes these vehicles can start up using gasoline, and then it can be transferred and powered on compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, liquefied propane, or hydrogen, all things that if municipalities are using will take pressure off gas prices.

Now think about it. This is an opportunity for Congress to do something to help to create a market for other vehicles. Right now sometimes the private marketplace isn't able to come up as quickly as we want it, so we have got local units of government that are saying we want to use these types of vehicles; and this Rules Committee, Mr. Speaker, has denied the tax credit that would empower that kind of thing. It makes no sense to me. I am just deeply disappointed that folks on the Rules Committee who are in the majority just rejected this idea. It is not a partisan idea. It is what is called a good idea that we need to move forward.

In 1968, Richard Nixon campaigned for the Presidency claiming he had a secret plan to end the war. He went all over the country and said: I have got a secret plan to end the war. If you elect me President of the United States, my secret plan to end the war will win it all and will bring it all home.

Well, we all know there was no secret plan. His Secretary of Defense said so, everyone has declared so, and history shows it. But there are eerie similarities between that declaration of Richard Nixon in 1968 and the words of now Speaker PELOSI when she was the minority leader: She had a plan to bring gas prices down.

Well, if what the majority is doing on the Rules Committee is rejecting commonsense ideas like tax credits for biofuel vehicles that help suburban communities in my district, I am very interested for when this secret plan that the Speaker has alluded to is going to be coming forward. I don't think there is a secret plan, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from Illinois has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. ROSKAM. I think the Speaker in the last campaign was using the type of campaign rhetoric that is now unfortunately coming home to roost.

I am deeply disappointed that the Rules Committee didn't see fit to let a commonsense idea that helps the suburban municipalities that I represent cope with outrageous gas prices.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Vermont, my colleague from the Rules Committee, Mr. WELCH.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. I thank the gentleman from New York.

This bill has many good features, and I want to speak about two. One is energy and two is children.

If we are going to take on the challenge of energy independence, then we have to start providing incentives, as we do in this bill, for wind, for solar, for biomass, for alternative energy and efficiencies. It is a confident Nation that takes on that challenge. It is a submissive Nation where the leader of our country goes hat in hand to a country that is not our friend and asks him to solve our problem by pumping more oil. This moves us in a confident direction of independence, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance.

The second is children. It is troubling I think to many of us in this country, and many of us in this body, that the gap between the wealthy and the poor has never been wider. The top five hedge fund managers last year earned \$12.6 billion. The 9 million lowest income families, that was their equal income, \$12.5 billion.

This bill finally increases the earned income tax credit for low-income families, bringing down the floor to \$8,500,

and 15 percent above that is going to be eligible. Do you know what that is going to mean just in the State of Vermont? 21,000 kids are going to get help. 21,000 kids. It also means 77 low-income kids from military families are going to get some assistance. This is money in their pocket where they too can be self-reliant.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY), a former member of the Rules Committee.

□ 1115

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this closed rule and the underlying bill which the Democratic majority refers to as the Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008. I don't know how anyone can call this an energy creation act when it does nothing, absolutely nothing, to lower the price of gasoline.

With a week-long recess ahead, I am sure the majority wants to pass something with the word "energy" in it so they can pay lip service, while the American people are paying more at the pump.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the American people are demanding real change and real solutions. They want Congress to end this energy crisis which is eating into the budgets of American families and harming their quality of life.

This bill will not solve their problems. While this bill does extend temporarily some important tax provisions, it does absolutely nothing to address the looming alternative minimum tax which will hit millions of Americans, in fact, 22 million of them, if this Congress fails to act. And there's nothing in this bill concerning the alternative minimum tax.

Shortly we will begin debate on another rule for the budget conference report. I have often heard my colleagues on the other side refer to the Federal budget as a moral document. Mr. Speaker, I agree with them. I agree with them.

However, when I look at the details of this budget, I can't help but ask, how is it moral to impose the largest tax increase in the history of this country on working Americans, almost \$683 billion over the next 5 years?

Mr. Speaker, how is it moral to raise the marginal tax rate on lower income workers and impose tax burdens on marriage, children, and family businesses?

Mr. Speaker, how is it moral to provide more than \$1 trillion in discretionary spending, while doing absolutely nothing to reform entitlement spending and to ensure the solvency of Social Security and Medicare for our future generations, indeed, our children and our grandchildren?

The majority can refer to its budget as a moral document all they want to, but the devil is in the detail, Mr. Speaker. Apparently the majority believes it's moral to rack up debt and raise taxes to pay for it.

Mr. Speaker, we need to cut government spending, and we need to reform uncontrolled entitlement growth by eliminating waste, fraud and abuse, so that we can provide tax relief to hard-working Americans and to prevent the tax increases of the Democratic budget, \$683 billion.

I urge my colleagues, vote against this rule, the underlying bill and the Democratic budget.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE).

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, in a weak economy it's important for us to take steps to help small businesses create jobs and provide targeted tax relief to middle class American taxpayers.

Today's tax relief package will encourage investment in renewable energy and energy efficient technologies. We help small businesses by extending the R&D tax credit and the State and local sales tax deductions.

Also included are extensions of three tax cuts that I introduced last year, including extending the \$250 tax credit to help teachers pay for out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies, encouraging companies to donate computers to schools, and investing in the clean-up and development of former industrial sites, commonly referred to as brownfields.

This bill cuts taxes for small businesses, promotes energy independence, and provides targeted tax relief for middle class American families.

I urge my colleagues to support this tax relief package.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Ms. GIFFORDS).

Ms. GIFFORDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of passage of H.R. 6049, the Energy and Tax Extenders Act.

Back home in Arizona, each and every day practically, we have free energy that radiates from the sky. An Arizona utility company recently proposed a plan to take advantage of that sunshine by building one of the world's largest solar power plants, 280 megawatts. This project will inject millions of dollars into the State and regional economy, and once it's complete, will produce enough electricity to power 77,000 homes.

This exciting announcement comes with a caveat. If Congress fails to extend the 30 percent solar tax investment tax credit, this plant will not be constructed. The same stipulation has been given for a variety of solar projects across the Southwest.

H.R. 6049 provides those vital extensions for renewable energy tax credits which include solar energy, and it will be the fourth time that the United States of House of Representatives has acted on this issue.

I have repeatedly pushed for passage of these extensions because I know

that they're essential for the solar industry in our country. They will spur innovation, decrease our emission, and improve our energy independence.

With technology improving, many solar industry leaders furthermore believe that solar energy is on track to be cost competitive with fossil fuels by 2015, if not sooner. But to achieve the goal, we have to act today before the current energy tax incentive expires.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on the Energy and Tax Extenders Act. This is an important piece of legislation.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains on each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Washington has 10 minutes. The gentleman from New York has 17 minutes.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I will reserve my time.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCNERNEY).

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, over the next few years the renewable energy industry in the United States is poised to create hundreds of thousands of family wage jobs. But none of it will happen, and in fact we will lose jobs if we don't extend the investment and production tax credits for new energy technologies.

As someone who spent my entire career in the wind industry, I know firsthand how critical these credits are to increasing renewable energy use and production. These incentives helped to turn wind power into a viable and growing energy option.

Just last week, the Department of Energy released a report estimating that wind could provide 20 percent of our Nation's energy by 2030. Renewable energy is now competitive with conventional power.

I recently hosted a meeting in my district with the heads of solar and wind energy companies to discuss the potential for employment in the renewable sector. It's clear, with the right Federal incentives, the industry will flourish, and we could see the creation of half a million new energy technology jobs in just the next few years.

There's also a flip side. When the production and investment tax credits lapse, there's a devastating consequence for the renewable energy industry. For instance, the last time we didn't extend the production tax credit, the wind industry lost thousands of good paying, green energy jobs all across our country.

That's why today's legislation is so important. If we are serious about weaning ourselves off foreign oil, we need to pass the production and investment tax credits today.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I continue to reserve my time.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, first of all I think my friend from Georgia needs some responding to in terms of the issue of the price of gas today. I just want to point out that what is false is Republicans, not Democrats, advocated and tried to pass legislation to increase the gas tax on Americans, offering legislation that would cost American drivers \$800 million. That was a GOP motion to recommit on H.R. 2776 on August 4, 2007. And that data comes from the Joint Committee on Taxation.

The fact is not a single member of the Democratic Caucus supported the Republican effort to increase the gas tax on American families. That comes from rollcall vote 834.

The fact is that the Democratic leadership has not brought forward a bill to increase the gas tax on drivers, only your side of the aisle.

Another point dealing with the pay-fors in this legislation. I just want to point out one of the pay-fors, the worldwide interest allocation, would bring in \$24 billion raised to help pay for what we're attempting to do here.

I know my friend, Mr. HASTINGS, was making reference to this, that these are simply tax increases. The provision that we're talking about specifically in worldwide interest allocation, \$29 billion, if so, if this is a tax increase, I just want to remind the gentleman that in H.R. 3221, the Ways and Means amendment to the Democratic homeownership rescue bill, that the same provision was included in that bill in which 95 members of your party supported it, including Mr. HAYES, Mr. PORTER, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. HULSHOF, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mr. CAMP, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KELLER, Mr. KNOLLENBERG, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. LEWIS, Mr. LINDER, Mr. WALBERG, Mrs. DRAKE, Mr. ENGLISH, Mr. FOSSELLA, Mr. GERLACH, Mr. MURPHY—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from New York has expired.

Mr. ARCURI. I yield the gentleman 1 additional minute.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. WELLER, Mr. WILSON and Mr. YOUNG.

If these are tax increases, I just want you to know, for the record, that in the previous bill that was passed by this House, 95 members of your caucus supported the identical provision that is in this bill.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

In response to my good friend from New York's response, let's set the record straight. We are talking about tax extenders. By definition, tax extenders mean we are extending existing tax relief for people. These are in law already. They have been extended many, many times in the past and always been extended without raising taxes on the other end.

Now the gentleman says that the provision they have in this bill may or may not have bipartisan support. I'm

not going to argue with that point. It probably should be looked at on its merits.

But my point in this and the whole part of this debate is that these are extending existing tax relief for the American people, and you don't have to start setting the principle of raising taxes in other areas to continue tax extensions that are already in law. That's the point that I was making.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF).

Mr. SCHIFF. I rise in support of this energy and jobs bill and, in particular, want to talk about two provisions that are very important to my constituents and I think very important to the country.

The first are provisions that would extend tax credits for the solar energy industry. In my district alone, there are hundreds of jobs at stake. These are hundreds of good, well-paying, clean jobs that not only are good for the citizens in my district, but also are good for the country. We need an Apollo project like effort to wean ourselves off fossil fuels.

We want the ability to be able to tell the oil producing nations of the world that they can take their oil and they can keep it, that we don't need it.

We want to be able to address global warming. We want to be able to make sure that we have a sound energy policy based on this Nation's future. And solar energy is a big part of the solution.

So this tax credit alone, I've had business people in my district tell me if this tax credit goes away, those jobs will go away. It's as simple as that. Homeowners won't be able to meet the financial burden of putting solar power panels on their roofs. Those that produce those panels will have to lay off the people in that industry. People will become more reliant on fossil fuels, not less.

There's a second provision, very important to my constituents and also very important to an industry that has a positive balance of trade with every other country on earth, and that is the entertainment industry. We have tax incentives to try to keep production in this country of small and medium sized films. We're losing a lot of that production to Canada. We'll lose even more if the tax credits that incentivize those small productions go away. I'm very proud that we're taking action to deal with the problem of runaway production. Again, good, well-paying jobs that we want to keep in this country. This legislation will help keep them there.

Many of my constituents are losing those jobs to Canada, Australia and other countries because those other countries are offering incentives to keep and move production there.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from California has expired.

Mr. ARCURI. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

□ 1130

This good bill will help us wean ourselves off fossil fuels. It will help us keep good-paying jobs in the energy industry, in the entertainment industry, and a great many other industries, and I urge support.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, once again, can I inquire of the time on both sides.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Washington has 9 minutes. The gentleman from New York has 10 minutes.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I would inquire of my friend from New York how many speakers he has.

Mr. ARCURI. We have no additional speakers, so I am prepared to close.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. In that case, Mr. Speaker, I will yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask my colleagues to vote against the previous question so we can address the issue of high gasoline prices. But before I make my motion and explain what my motion would be if we defeat the previous question, I want to quote several parts of an editorial that was written by Tracy Warner who is the editorial writer for the Wenatchee World newspaper in Wenatchee, Washington, in my district. He kind of hits some of the issues of what we are doing, or probably I should say not doing, on the head.

[From the Wenatchee World, May 14, 2008]

IRRATIONAL POLICY PART OF THE SHOW

(By Tracy Warner)

The Keystone Cops of Congress wave their truncheons, circle and bump and wriggle their mustaches, then rush to the paddy wagon in search of greedy oil companies. In this time of hardship, this will have to suffice for energy policy.

The goal of the troupe is to somehow make the price of gasoline lower. High gasoline prices are extremely unpopular. If they could be forced downward, this would please Americans at an advantageous time on the political calendar. If that is not possible, and likely it is not, then complaining loudly will do. Or, for a real show of statesmanship, you can dole out financial punishment to the companies that make the product you want more of.

The most recent gesture was a vote Tuesday to have the government cease stockpiling oil in the strategic petroleum reserve, where some 700 million barrels are kept for national emergencies. This halt, passed by the Senate 97-1 and the House 385-25, will reduce federal petroleum purchases by 70,000 barrels a day. The hope is this will affect world oil markets, which are based on global production of 87 million barrels a day. Congress has increased supplies by 0.08 percent. We should be grateful.

In a very small way this shows our representatives have some understanding of economics. Oil markets are mainly a supply-and-demand issue. Raise supply and the price should drop, if demand is steady. Raise supplies by 0.08 percent and the price will drop, maybe by a like amount. We will watch with great anticipation.

The other legs of the constantly evolving federal oil policy are not so easily explained. Congress remains adamant that we will not attempt to affect supplies by drilling on a few thousand acres of the vast Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, where production

could exceed 1 million barrels a day. The reason given is this is part of an "oil friendly policy" and we cannot "drill our way" to "energy independence" because the effect of a million barrels is so small. So we deny ourselves a million barrels a day because it is so little, and then demand the federal government cease purchasing 70,000 barrels a day, because that is too much.

Some propose sending the Justice Department to file an antitrust case against OPEC, because its members scheme to limit the supply of oil and thus drive up the price. So, we do not wish to drill ourselves, because that would be wrong, but we demand OPEC sell us more, and if they don't we will send lawyers. And oh, we want "energy independence."

And with lawyers after OPEC, the cops will still be after the oil companies. The line is oil companies get "tax subsidies" they do not deserve. So the House has voted to rescind a tax break for the five largest oil companies. The "subsidy" to which these congressmen refer was no special deal. It was a two-point corporate tax cut given to all manufacturers in 2004. In the meantime, oil companies pay taxes. According to the Tax Foundation, based on data from the Energy Information Agency, it is only in the last three years that after-tax profits of the oil industry have exceeded its taxes paid to federal and state governments. In the last 25 years, oil company taxes were nearly double oil company profits—government makes twice off oil what oil companies make off oil.

On we go. Newly popular in Congress is a windfall profits tax, to collect for government the oil profits government considers "obscene." Oil company profit margins are less than many other industries, but setting that aside, what would be the effect of confiscating them? When this was tried in 1980, oil companies stopped selling the product from which only government would profit, and we went from expensive gas to no gas.

And, we can make price gouging a crime, even though it already is a crime in most states. Make it a crime to sell fuel when prices are high. Won't that increase supplies?

The sum of all this policymaking is astonishing incompetence. Playing for the crowd usually leads this way.

Let me just make a few points here that he raised that I thought were rather interesting.

He talks about what Congress is doing or not doing, and he says then, and I will quote verbatim, Mr. Speaker, from his editorial, "The most recent gesture was a vote Tuesday to have the government cease stockpiling oil in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, where some 700 million barrels are kept for national emergencies. This halt, passed by the Senate 97-1 and the House 385-25, will reduce Federal petroleum purchases by 70,000 barrels a day. The hope is this will affect world oil prices or oil markets which are based on global production of 87 million barrels a day. Congress has increased supplies by 0.08 percent."

He then goes on to say, after I quote there, he goes on to talk then about things that we probably are not doing and should be doing otherwise. He goes on to compliment Congress by saying that "at least they have some understanding of economics." If you're going to not put oil in a reserve, you presumably have more supply.

He then goes on to talk about what we haven't been doing, which of course

is looking at more known reserves we have in our country to be energy independent. Again I would like to quote, then, verbatim as he makes, I think, a very good point:

"Congress remains adamant that we will not attempt to affect supplies by drilling on a few thousand acres of the vast Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, where the production could exceed 1 million barrels a day. The reason given is this is part of an 'oil friendly policy' and we cannot 'drill our way' to 'energy independence' because the effect of a million barrels is so small. So we deny ourselves a million barrels a day because it is so little, and then demand the Federal Government cease purchasing 70,000 barrels a day, because that is too much."

Mr. Speaker, he goes on to talk about other things here, but they make a very good point. The bottom line is our energy policy is not looking at the supply side of it. We import so much of our crude oil and we aren't energy independent in that sense.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask my colleagues to vote "no" on the previous question so I have an opportunity to amend the rule.

Since the Democrats took control of Congress in January of 2007, the cost of gasoline has risen to record-setting prices. According to a report from just 2 days ago by the AAA in my State of Washington, the price of gasoline is at a record \$3.86 per gallon. That's 24 cents higher than just last month. The average price of a gallon of diesel is \$4.69, which is \$1.61 higher than a year ago. In the Tri-Cities where I live, a gallon of gas is \$3.83. In Yakima, in the central part of my district, it's \$3.84.

[From the Seattle Times, May 19, 2008]

AAA: AVERAGE GALLON OF GAS IN WASHINGTON HITS \$3.86

The AAA auto club says the average price of a gallon of gasoline in Washington continues to climb into record territory at \$3.86.

That's up 24 cents in the past month and 42 cents in the past year. It's seven cents higher than the national average.

The AAA survey for today found that the average price of a gallon of diesel in the state is \$4.69. That's up 29 cents in the past month and \$1.61 in the past year.

The AAA says the highest gas prices in the state are at Bellingham at \$3.93 and the lowest in Spokane at \$3.70.

Prices in some other cities, according to the AAA: Olympia \$3.89, Seattle \$3.88, Tacoma \$3.87, Vancouver \$3.84, Tri-Cities \$3.83, Yakima \$3.84.

This increase in prices is causing real strain on family budgets, farmers, and for small businesses. This Congress needs to act, and we can't afford to sit and do nothing while prices continue to climb. The American people deserve action.

Speaker PELOSI made a promise that the Democrats had a "commonsense plan" to "lower the price at the pump." But this Democrat Congress has done nothing but see fuel prices rise.

One of the most important things that this House can do is recognize a

basic economic principle of supply and demand. Mr. Speaker, the laws of supply and demand cannot be changed by wishful thinking. At times, I get the distinct impression that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe that wishful thinking will actually lower gas prices.

I support proposals to invent and to develop new sources of energy. I think we should have a diverse portfolio of energy, and I believe a vast majority of my colleagues do as well. But gas, diesel, and oil are absolutely vital to our economy and our way of life and our future.

The problem we are facing at the gas pump is one of high demand and limited supply, and it's part of a global economy and a global product. With India and China suddenly consuming enormous amounts of oil, the price of it is being bid up around the world. The way to combat rising prices due to high demand is to increase supply. And yet proposals to increase oil and gas production and exploration in our country have faced years and years in opposition. Mr. Tracy, in his article, points that out as it relates to ANWR.

We've been stymied by Democrats in the House, blocked by Democrat Senators, and vetoed by a Democrat Senator specifically with ANWR. This liberal Congress is continuing to say "no" to developing energy in our country, to block any bill from being considered or voted upon that would allow for oil and natural gas exploration in Alaska or in the oceans on the Outer Continental Shelf, while at the same time they pass bills threatening to sue foreign countries to produce more oil. That doesn't increase supply, Mr. Speaker.

We are now paying the price for so many years of repeated refusal to make use of our country's own natural resources. Not only are we seeing gas prices going up and up, but our country is even more dependent on foreign sources of oil. Often the response to this argument from the other side of the aisle is that even if we approve production in ANWR or coastal reserves today, it wouldn't come on line for years and wouldn't really help much.

The hollowness of this argument in my mind, Mr. Speaker, is astonishing. We are paying the price today for their years of opposition to real solutions, and they want to keep saying "no" and blaming somebody else.

America can't afford to keep sticking its head in the sand when it comes to building more refineries and developing our own oil and gas reserves. It's time for the House to act. It's time for the House to debate ideas for lowering prices, and it's time for the majority to reveal their promised plan.

By defeating the previous question, Mr. Speaker, this House can finally consider solutions to rising energy costs. When the previous question is defeated, I will move to add a section to the rule, not rewrite the rule, that would lower the gas prices of unleaded gasoline.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have the text of the amendment and extraneous material inserted into the RECORD prior to the vote on the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to defeat the previous question so that we can consider this vitally important issue for America.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend from Washington. It's always a pleasure managing a rule on the floor with you.

I would like to thank him for making a point which I think is a very good point in his closing, and that is we can't drill our way to oil independence. I think that is abundantly clear, especially to Americans. I think they know that.

The fact of the matter is, is that oil is a finite resource. That as much as we want to dream and that as much as we want to wish, it is a finite resource. And while there may be reserves that may last us 5 years or 10 years, the fact of the matter is if we don't deal with the fact that it is a finite resource, then our children and our grandchildren will have to deal with the fact that there is no more oil left.

That's what today's bill does. That's what this rule does. It attempts to take real steps to promote alternative energy because that is the future of our children and our grandchildren.

H.R. 6049, if it passes the House today, it will be the fourth time the House has voted to extend many of these energy tax provisions. In each of the previous three times, the legislation has come under heavy fire because of the revenue-raising provisions that were included to ensure that the extensions were compliant with House pay-as-you-go rules. That is the new Democratic majority's commitment to lowering the national debt by bringing fiscal responsibility back to the House of Representatives.

The debate has not fallen on deaf ears. I applaud the Ways and Means Committee and Chairman RANGEL for its tireless commitment to finding less controversial means for paying for this vital tax relief and alternative energy development incentives. Their efforts have been successful judging by the list of organizations and businesses that are supporting H.R. 6049, including the League of Conservation Voters, the National Retail Federation, the National Wildlife Federation, Dow Chemical Company, The Sierra Club, The American Farm Bureau, and the list goes on and on.

Providing tax relief to middle class families and small businesses, providing incentives to promote alternative energy development, and adhering to fiscal responsibility should never, never be a partisan issue.

Too often in this Chamber we hear countless reasons why not to do something, but the fact of the matter is, we cannot afford to allow the vital tax relief and renewable energy incentives in H.R. 6049 to fall victim to Washington politics.

Just to set the record straight, by voting "yes" on the previous question and voting "yes" on the rule and bringing this legislation to the floor, it will allow 11 million families to deduct State and local sales taxes; it will allow 3½ million teachers to deduct classroom expenses so they can better educate the children they teach; it will allow 4 million families the ability to deduct education expenses and help put their children through college; it will allow 13 million families to claim the child tax credit and make it a little easier to put food on their table; and it will allow 27,000 domestic businesses to remain competitive in the global marketplace by investing in vital research and development.

Clearly we in the majority are working to advance the interests of the American people. I am hopeful we can come together later today, Republicans and Democrats, pass this rule, pass the underlying legislation, and move our country forward.

I urge a "yes" vote on the previous question and on the rule.

The material previously referred to by Mr. HASTINGS of Washington is as follows:

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 1212 OFFERED BY MR. HASTINGS OF WASHINGTON

At the end of the resolution, add the following:

SEC. 3. Notwithstanding any other provision of this resolution or the operation of the previous question, it shall be in order to consider any amendment to the substitute which the proponent asserts, if enacted, would have the effect of lowering the national average price per gallon of regular unleaded gasoline. Such amendments shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for thirty minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived except those arising under clause 9 of rule XXI.

(The information contained herein was provided by Democratic Minority on multiple occasions throughout the 109th Congress.)

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Democratic majority agenda and a vote to allow the opposition, at least for the moment, to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives, (VI, 308-311) describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as "a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge." To defeat the previous question is to give the

opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that "the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition" in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: "The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition."

Because the vote today may look bad for the Democratic majority they will say "the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever." But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the definition of the previous question used in the Floor Procedures Manual published by the Rules Committee in the 109th Congress, (page 56). Here's how the Rules Committee described the rule using information from Congressional Quarterly's "American Congressional Dictionary": "If the previous question is defeated, control of debate shifts to the leading opposition member (usually the minority Floor Manager) who then manages an hour of debate and may offer a germane amendment to the pending business."

Deschler's Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the subchapter titled "Amending Special Rules" states: "a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate." (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon."

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Democratic majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Mr. ARCURI. I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

mittee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 1213 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1213

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5658) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2009 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2009, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed two hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services. After general debate, the Committee of the Whole shall rise without motion. No further consideration of the bill shall be in order except pursuant to a subsequent order of the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. For the purpose of debate only, Mr. Speaker, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Washington, my good friend, Mr. HASTINGS. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 1213 provides for consideration of general debate for H.R. 5658. This debate will come under a structured rule.

The rule provides 2 hours of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services. The rule waives all points of order against the bill's consideration except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI.

As the chairwoman of the Rules Committee announced yesterday evening, the committee intends to meet later today to report out an additional rule which will provide for the remaining consideration of the bill, including amendments and final passage.

This two-part process has been used over the years to ensure that the Rules Committee has ample time to consider the amendments submitted to the committee, and there were a substantial number of amendments offered.

Mr. Speaker, the National Defense Authorization Act is one of the most comprehensive and important pieces of

legislation that the House considers each year. The overwhelmingly bipartisan support for this bill is proof that we understand our obligation as legislators to support our military and ensure our national security by coming together and producing quality measures.

I am proud that the chairman and ranking Republican of the Armed Services Committee introduced the underlying legislation together. Chairman SKELTON and Representative HUNTER are to be congratulated for a job well done. Without their work, the unanimous support for the bill with a vote of 61-0 in the Armed Services Committee would not have been possible.

Mr. Speaker, for too long, President Bush's administration has neglected the needs of our military. I was just in Baghdad 2 days ago, and I saw evidence of this neglect. While the President has shown little hesitation to send troops into harm's way, his refusal to take care of them and their families when they return is downright despicable.

The underlying National Defense Authorization Act gives our servicemen and -women and their families the resources that they need and deserve. That includes providing a 3.9 percent pay raise for all servicemembers and expands the authority of the Defense Department to offer bonuses.

This bill takes care of our soldiers and their families by increasing access to financial aid for education, expanding survivor benefits, and enhancing health care services. And it rejects President Bush's proposal to inflict \$1.9 billion in TRICARE fee and premium increases and other increases in health care costs for soldiers.

The bill also strengthens our national security by providing our troops with state-of-the-art equipment and authorizes the expansion of the military.

It includes fiscally responsible provisions that are designed to increase efficiency and accountability in the military.

The bill cracks down on the Blackwaters of the world and requires the Department of Defense to put into place policies and systems under which contractors are held accountable for their actions.

The underlying legislation also addresses the issue of readiness. Our Armed Forces are hurting today because we continue to ask them to do more with less.

Under this bill, Congress is making it clear that at least one of the three branches of government will not allow rhetorical and ideological policies to stand in the way of doing the right thing by our troops.

We continue to send our brave young men and women into battle without proper equipment or protection. The National Defense Authorization Act authorizes nearly \$800 million for personal body armor, as well as \$2.6 billion for mine resistant ambush-protected vehicles for our troops in the Middle East.